

# PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

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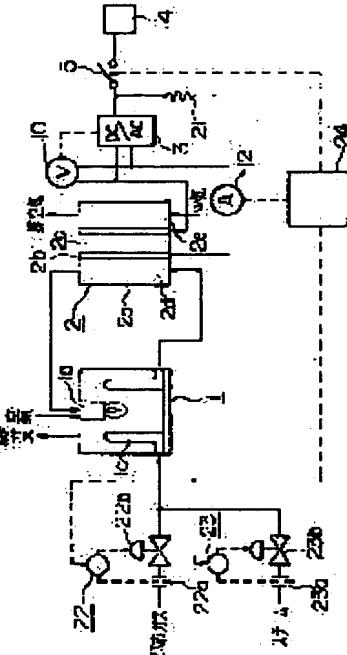
## (54) FUEL CELL POWER GENERATING APPARATUS AND ITS OPERATION STARTING METHOD

### (57)Abstract:

**PURPOSE:** To suppress the deterioration of a fuel cell and lower the withstand voltage of a d.c/a.c. transducer to be connected with the fuel cell.

**CONSTITUTION:** A reformed gas which is hydrogen-rich and produced by a fuel reformer 1 is supplied to a fuel cell 2. The d. c. output of the fuel cell is converted into a.c. by a d.c/a.c. transducer 3 and the a.c. output is supplied to an outer load 4 through a switchgear 5. A resistor 21 as an electric power consuming means is connected with the output side of the a.c. transducer 3. The switching operation of the switchgear 5 is controlled by a controller 24. At the time of operation starting, when the voltage of the cell 2 becomes a prescribed voltage, electricity supply to the resistor 21 from the d.c./a.c.

transducer 3 is started based on the measured value of volt meter 10 and the voltage of supplied electricity is raised from 0 to the rated voltage. After the voltage of the supplied electricity becomes the rated voltage V, the switchgear 5 is shut and the outer load 4 is connected. Since the load is turned on before the voltage becomes release voltage, deterioration of the fuel cell is suppressed and the withstand voltage of the d.c/a.c. transducer is lowered. Also, high load is not connected abruptly and thus fuel deficiency of the fuel cell is prevented.



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**CLAIMS**

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**[Claim(s)]**

[Claim 1] the hydrogen generated with a fuel reforming machine and this fuel reforming vessel -- the fuel cell power plant characterized by having the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel, and a power consumption means to consume the power of the above-mentioned fuel cell in a phase until it connects an external load to this fuel cell.

[Claim 2] the hydrogen which generated with a fuel reforming machine and this fuel reforming vessel -- the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant characterized by to increase gradually the electrical potential difference which is equipped with the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel , and a power-consumption means consume the power of the above-mentioned fuel cell in a phase until it connects an external load to this fuel cell , and is impressed to the above-mentioned power-consumption means according to one increment of the above-mentioned reformed gas or air in a flow rate .

[Claim 3] the hydrogen which generated with a fuel reforming machine and this fuel reforming vessel -- the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant characterized by to switch the input of the reforming raw material to the above-mentioned reforming machine to the feedback control by flow rate setup into which it is converted from the above-mentioned fuel cell current from a flow rate setup of a fixed generation of electrical energy before having the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel and connecting an external load to the above-mentioned fuel cell.

[Claim 4] the hydrogen generated with a fuel reforming machine and this fuel reforming vessel -- the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant characterized by performing a flow rate setup so that it may have the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel and the input of this fixed time amount and reforming raw material may be made to increase from the time of the reforming raw material injection to the above-mentioned reforming machine.

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[Translation done.]

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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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### [Detailed Description of the Invention]

#### [0001]

[Industrial Application] This invention relates to the operation starting approach before and after connecting a fuel cell power plant and this to an external load.

#### [0002]

[Description of the Prior Art] Drawing 5 is drawing showing the system outline of the conventional fuel cell power plant. this drawing -- setting -- 1 -- hydrogen -- it is the switch with which the fuel reforming machine which generates rich reformed gas, the fuel cell with which 2 uses as a fuel the reformed gas generated with the fuel reforming vessel 1, the DC to AC converter (DC/AC converter) from which 3 changes the dc output of a fuel cell 2 into an alternating current, and 4 were inserted in the external load, and 5 was inserted in the feeder circuit to a load 4.

[0003] Here, the reforming machine 1 comes to build 1d of reforming coils filled up with carburetor 1c of a reforming raw material, and a reforming catalyst in combustion furnace 1b of equipment of combustion burner 1a, and the reforming raw material tank 7 is connected to carburetor 1c through the raw material pump 6. Moreover, the fuel cell 2 was constituted as a cel stack which carried out the laminating of many unit cells as everyone knows, and expresses this fuel cell with fuel electrode 2a, air electrode 2b, and electrolyte layer 2c, fuel gas room 2d, and reaction air chamber 2e typically by a diagram. the outlet of 1d of reforming coils of the reforming machine 1 mentioned above, and the fuel gas room of a fuel cell 2 -- between 2d inlet ports -- the fuel gas supply line 8 -- moreover, the fuel gas room of a fuel cell 2 -- between a 2d outlet and combustion burner 1a of the reforming machine 1, the connecting piping of the off-gas supply line 9 is carried out.

[0004] Next, actuation is explained. if a steam is mixed in reforming raw materials, such as town gas and a methanol, and the reforming machine 1 is supplied -- a reforming raw material -- catalytic reaction with a reforming catalyst -- hydrogen -- reforming is carried out to rich gas -- having -- the fuel gas supply line 8 -- leading -- the fuel gas room of a fuel cell 2 -- 2d is supplied. On the other hand, reaction air is supplied to reaction air chamber 2e of a fuel cell 2, and a fuel cell 2 generates electricity by the electromotive reaction. The fuel (off-gas) of the remainder which did not participate in an electromotive reaction flows back through the off-gas supply line 9 to combustion burner 1a of the reforming machine 1 with a fuel cell 2. A reforming reaction is made to continue with the heat burned and obtained by this combustion burner 1a. The dc output outputted by the electromotive reaction with a fuel cell 2 is changed into an alternating current by DC to AC converter 3, and electric power is supplied to it by the external load 4 through a switch 5.

[0005] By the way, although it is somewhat behind from the supply point in time of a reforming raw material, reformed gas generation begins and the amount of generation comes to increase gradually with the reforming vessel 1, by the time it reaches the amount by which the amount of reformed gas generation was stabilized, a certain amount of time amount will be required. Moreover, since it is few immediately after fuel-supply starting to a fuel cell 2 and the whole fuel amount of supply cannot supply it to each unit cell of a cel stack enough, a fuel cell 2 is somewhat overdue from a fuel-supply initiation

point in time, and terminal voltage comes to rise by the electromotive reaction. In this case, in the state of the condition, i.e., an open circuit, of not connecting the external load 4, once the open-circuit voltage of a fuel cell 2 rises with the increment in the fuel amount of supply and rises to peak voltage, it shows an open-circuit voltage property which balances the electrical potential difference which descended a little according to change of the gas distribution inside a cell, change of electrolytic concentration, the leakage current, etc. On the other hand, if a fuel cell 2 carries out long duration neglect in the condition that an electrical potential difference is high, after generation-of-electrical-energy initiation with an open circuit, it is known that the elution of the platinum catalyst as an electrode catalyst and sintering will progress, and the catalyst engine performance will deteriorate.

[0006] Then, after detecting the open-circuit voltage of a fuel cell 2 and detecting peak value attainment of this open-circuit voltage conventionally, supplying electric power by connecting the external load 4 to a fuel cell 2 is proposed (refer to JP,64-655,A). Drawing 6 is a timing diagram which shows the operation starting approach. Time t -- if supply initiation of the reforming raw material is carried out by 1 at the reforming machine 1 -- delay [ some ] time -- t2 -- the reforming machine 1 -- generation of reformed gas -- starting -- time amount progress -- the amount of generation -- increasing -- Time t -- a generation of electrical energy is started with a fuel cell 2 in 3. After an electrical potential difference's rising and reaching peak value e1, electric supply to the external load 4 is performed by t4 the time of detecting the electrical potential difference e2 which descended somewhat rather than this peak value. In drawing 5, 10 is a voltmeter and 11 is a controller. The open-circuit voltage of a fuel cell 2 was measured with the voltmeter 10, and the measurement value is inputted into the controller 11. In a controller 11, the measurement value change of open-circuit voltage is supervised, an injection command gives a switch 5 by t4 the time of detecting an electrical potential difference e2, as mentioned above, and it is \*\*\*\*\*.

[0007]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] Since the conventional fuel cell power plant was constituted as mentioned above, it had the following problems. That is, the external load 4 could not be connected to open circuit voltage, but it was necessary to take the high withstand voltage of DC to AC converter 3, and the engine performance beyond the need needed to be required of the direct-current input circuit device of DC to AC converter 3. Moreover, also about a fuel cell 2, it must expose to open circuit voltage at once at the time of generation-of-electrical-energy initiation, and degradation will be brought forward.

[0008] Furthermore, although not taken into consideration about the input of a reforming raw material, to actually connect the external load 4, it is necessary to secure a required quantity of gas flow. If the capacity of a certain constant rate is supplied to the interior of a cell to the open circuit voltage of a fuel cell 2, fixed open circuit voltage will arise regardless of a quantity of gas flow. Therefore, in throwing in a reforming raw material fewer than the amount corresponding to the external load 4, it produces the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell 2, and the flame failure of combustion burner 1a of the reforming machine 1.

[0009] This invention was made in order to cancel the above troubles, it does not need to require the engine performance beyond the need of the DC to AC converter connected to a fuel cell, and aims at offering the fuel cell power plant which moreover does not expose a fuel cell to open circuit voltage. Moreover, it aims at offering the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant which produces neither the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell, nor the flame failure of the combustion burner of a fuel reforming machine. Furthermore, it aims at offering the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant which can feed a reforming raw material into a fuel reforming machine exactly.

[0010]

[Means for Solving the Problem] the hydrogen which generated the fuel cell power plant concerning invention of the 1st term of a claim with the fuel reforming vessel -- it is characterized by having a power consumption means to consume the power of a fuel cell in a phase until it connects an external load to the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel.

[0011] the hydrogen which generated the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant concerning invention of the 2nd term of a claim with the fuel reforming vessel -- it have a power

consumption means consume the power of a fuel cell in a phase until it connect an external load to the fuel cell which use rich reformed gas as a fuel , and it be characterize by to increase gradually the electrical potential difference impress to this power consumption means according to one increment in a flow rate of reformed gas or air .

[0012] the hydrogen which generated the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant concerning invention of the 3rd term of a claim with the fuel reforming vessel -- before having the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel and connecting an external load to this fuel cell, it is characterized by to switch the input of the reforming raw material to a reforming machine to the feedback control by flow rate setup into which it is converted from a fuel cell current from a flow rate setup of a fixed generation of electrical energy.

[0013] the hydrogen which generated the operation starting approach of the fuel cell power plant concerning invention of the 4th term of a claim with the fuel reforming vessel -- it has the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel, and is characterized by performing a flow rate setup so that the input of this fixed time amount and reforming raw material may be made to increase from the time of the reforming raw material injection to a reforming machine.

[0014]

[Function] In invention of the 1st term of a claim, before a fuel cell is connected to an external load, a power consumption means serves as a load of a fuel cell, and an injection of a load is performed before open circuit voltage. Therefore, pressure-proofing of the DC to AC converter which can control degradation of a fuel cell and is connected to a fuel cell can be lowered.

[0015] In invention of the 2nd term of a claim, the electrical potential difference impressed to a power consumption means is gradually increased according to one increment in a flow rate of reformed gas or air. Therefore, a heavy load is not suddenly connected to a fuel cell, and the flame failure of the combustion burner of the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell or a reforming machine can be prevented.

[0016] In invention of the 3rd term of a claim, before connecting an external load to a fuel cell, the flow rate of a reforming raw material is switched to the feedback control by flow rate setup converted from a fuel cell current from a flow rate setup of a fixed generation of electrical energy. Therefore, the flow rate of a reforming raw material is always amended to the fall of a fuel cell electrical potential difference with time, and supply of the flame failure of the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell and the combustion burner of a reforming machine and the excessive fuel for a combustion burner can be prevented.

[0017] In invention of the 4th term of a claim, the input is increased in early stages of a reforming raw material injection. Therefore, the ununiformity of a container and the reforming raw material by the volume in piping and the ununiformity of the cell fuel by the instability of a reforming reaction can be prevented in early stages of a reforming raw material injection.

[0018]

[Example]

Example 1. drawing 1 is drawing showing the system outline of the fuel cell power plant by one example of this invention. In drawing 1 , the same sign is given to drawing 5 and a corresponding part, and the detail explanation is omitted. In this drawing, the resistor 21 as a power consumption means is connected to the output side of DC to AC converter 3. Moreover, the measurement value of a voltmeter 10 is supplied to DC to AC converter 3. An ammeter 12 is connected with a fuel cell 2 between DC to AC converters 3, and the cell current of a fuel cell 2 is measured. And the measurement value measured with an ammeter 12 is supplied to a controller 24.

[0019] 22 is the flow rate control unit of the town gas as a reforming raw material, and 22a and 22b are the flowmeters and control valves which were allotted to the supply path of town gas, respectively. Moreover, 23 is the flow rate control device of the steam which is a reforming raw material, and 23a and 23b are the flowmeters and control valves which were allotted to the supply path of steam. Actuation of the flow rate control units 22 and 23 is controlled by the controller 24. Moreover, the switching action of a switch 5 is also controlled by the controller 24. This example is constituted as mentioned above and constitutes others like the example of drawing 5 .

[0020] Next, actuation is explained. Since it is the same as that of the example of drawing 5 mentioned

above, the fundamental actuation as a fuel power plant is omitted. Hereafter, the operation starting approach is explained using the timing diagram of drawing 2. The temperature up of the reforming machine 1 is completed and the town gas and steam which are a reforming raw material are introduced into the reforming machine 1 by the flow rate control devices 22 and 23 by t1 the time of becoming the temperature (generally 700-800-degreeC) in which a reforming reaction is possible (drawing 2 A). [0021] Reforming of the reforming raw material is carried out to the reformed gas which contains hydrogen so much by catalytic reaction inside the reforming machine 1. however, the amount of reforming -- the effect of the inert gas before the stability of a reaction, and installation of a reforming raw material -- Time t -- it increases more nearly gently than the time of 2 (this drawing B). this reformed gas -- time difference -- having -- Time t -- a fuel cell 2 is reached by 3 and the electrical potential difference of a fuel cell 2 begins a rise by the electromotive reaction (this drawing C). When the electrical potential difference of a fuel cell 2 rises and it does not connect with the load with the increment in the amount of reformed gas, open circuit voltage e2 is reached (broken line of this drawing C).

[0022] In this example, when becoming the predetermined electrical potential difference e1 (<e2) at the time of the power surge of a fuel cell 2, based on the measurement value from a voltmeter 10, the electric supply to a resistor 21 is started from DC to AC converter 3 (this drawing D). Here, it is time amount from 0 about the electric supply electrical potential difference to a resistor 21. It is made to go up to rated voltage V with t. After the electric supply electrical potential difference to a resistor 21 turns into rated voltage V, an injection command is given to a switch 5 from a controller 24 by t4 at the time, and the external load 4 is connected to a fuel cell 2 (this drawing E). In addition, after connecting the external load 4 to a fuel cell 2, the input f4 of the reforming raw material to the reforming machine 1 is made to increase from the amount f2 before it (this drawing A).

[0023] According to the example of drawing 1, a resistor 21 is connected to the output side of DC to AC converter 3, and before the electrical potential difference of a fuel cell 2 turns into open circuit voltage, electric power is supplied by the resistor 21 from DC to AC converter 3. Since it is carried out by this before an injection of a load serves as open circuit voltage, pressure-proofing of DC to AC converter 3 which can control the degradation, without exposing a fuel cell 2 to open circuit voltage, and is connected to a fuel cell 2 can be lowered. Moreover, since it is made to go up gradually, without raising rapidly the electric supply electrical potential difference to a resistor 21, the consumption of the hydrogen in a fuel cell 2 increases gradually. Therefore, even if the permutation of the gas the hydrogen in reformed gas or inside a fuel cell 2 is not more enough than installation of a reforming raw material because of a short period of time, it is. Since there are time amount allowances of t, it does not become the lack of a fuel with a fuel cell 2. Moreover, although the gas which is not consumed with a fuel cell 2 is returned to combustion burner 1a of the reforming machine 1 and serves as a reforming heat source, since the hydrogen consumption in a fuel cell 2 rises according to the generation rate of reformed gas, the flame failure by the lack of a fuel does not arise in combustion burner 1a.

[0024] Example 2., next the timing diagram of drawing 3 are used, and other examples of the operation starting approach are explained. Generally the initial input of a reforming raw material is set up supposing the capacity equivalent to an output required for minimum load operation. This is because the fuel cell 2 has not generated electricity at the time of reforming raw material installation, so a reference value cannot be set up, if a fuel cell 2 will be in a fixed generation-of-electrical-energy condition, from a cell current, can determine the amount of need hydrogen and can compute the need input of a reforming raw material. In the example shown in drawing 3, it is t5 the time of a fuel cell 2 being in a fixed generation-of-electrical-energy condition about the supply set point of a reforming raw material, and before connecting the external load 4 to a fuel cell 2, it switches to the flow rate f3 by cell current feedback from the initial input f2 (drawing 3 A).

[0025] In this case, based on the measurement value from an ammeter 12, the hydrogen consumption in a fuel cell 2 is uniquely determined by the controller 24. Moreover, the hydrogen specific consumption in a fuel cell 2 computes the amount of the thrown-in reforming raw material which is generally 75 - 80% and carries out division process by this ratio with a controller 24 with the property of a fuel cell 2.

And a controller 24 orders this amount the flow rate control devices 22 and 23, and carries out feedback control.

[0026] By feedback control, even if property degradation (it is known that an electrical potential difference will generally fall with time) arises in a fuel cell 2, it can operate, without throwing in an excessive raw material. Moreover, the thing for which a switch 5 is closed by t6 at the time after shifting to feedback control, and the external load 4 is connected to a fuel cell 2. Operation stabilized regardless of the size of the external load 4 is attained. That is, supply of the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell 2, the flame failure of combustion burner 1a of the reforming machine 1, and the excessive fuel to combustion burner 1a can be prevented. In addition, since other operation starting actuation is the same as that of the example shown in drawing 2, explanation is omitted. Drawing 3 B-E supports drawing 2 B-E.

[0027] Example 3., next the timing diagram of drawing 4 are used, and the example of further others of the operation starting approach is explained. In the initial input of a reforming raw material, by the operating method the case where piping from the flow rate control units 22 and 23 to a fuel cell 2 and the volume of a container are large, and in case there is a container with a very big capacity, since inert gas permutes, even if Rhine which generally introduces a reforming raw material introduces a raw material, it cannot fully be permuted. For this reason, in case an early reforming raw material is introduced, the flow rate f1 which took the insufficiency of a permutation into consideration to the required flow rate f2 is set up. And after the reformed gas outputted from the reforming machine 1 becomes enough, it is set as a flow rate f2 by t4 the time of being.

[0028] Since the amount of reformed gas also increases while the permutation of a reforming raw material is early performed by setting the initial input of a reforming raw material as f1, it can generate electricity without causing the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell 2. Moreover, since combustion burner 1a for temperature ups is generally extinguished at the time of reforming initiation, even if the temperature of the reforming machine 1 tends to fall and the amount of off-gas of a fuel cell 2 increases it, the reforming machine 1 does not become an unusual elevated temperature. In addition, since other operation starting actuation is the same as that of the example shown in drawing 3, explanation is omitted. Drawing 4 B-E supports drawing 3 B-E.

[0029] In the example 4. above-mentioned example, although what used DC to AC converter 3 for what supplies electric power to the external load 4 was shown, it is applicable also like what forms a DC to DC converter. Moreover, the direct current resistance other than an alternating current heater can also be used as a resistor 21. Moreover, although the example using town gas as a reforming raw material is shown, macromolecule hydrocarbons, such as a methanol, may be used.

[0030]

[Effect of the Invention] the hydrogen which was generated with the fuel reforming vessel according to invention given in the 1st term of a claim -- in a phase until it connects an external load to the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel Since it has a power consumption means to consume the power of a fuel cell, and a power consumption means serves as a load of a fuel cell and an injection of a load is performed before open circuit voltage, before a fuel cell is connected to an external load, Pressure-proofing of the DC to AC converter which can control degradation of a fuel cell and is connected to a fuel cell can be lowered.

[0031] It has a power consumption means to consume the power of a fuel cell in a phase until it connects an external load to the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel. the hydrogen which was generated with the fuel reforming vessel according to invention given in the 2nd term of a claim -- Since the electrical potential difference impressed to this power consumption means is gradually increased according to one increment in a flow rate of reformed gas or air, a heavy load is not suddenly connected to a fuel cell, and the flame failure of the combustion burner of the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell or a reforming machine can be prevented.

[0032] It has the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel. the hydrogen which was generated with the fuel reforming vessel according to invention given in the 3rd term of a claim -- Since the input of the reforming raw material to a reforming machine is switched to the feedback control by flow rate setup into which it is converted from a fuel cell current from a flow rate setup of a fixed generation of

electrical energy before connecting an external load to this fuel cell. The flow rate of a reforming raw material is always amended to the fall of a fuel cell electrical potential difference with time, and supply of the flame failure of the lack of a fuel of a fuel cell and the combustion burner of a reforming machine and the excessive fuel for a combustion burner can be prevented.

[0033] the hydrogen which generated with a fuel reforming vessel according to invention given in the 4th term of a claim -- it has the fuel cell which uses rich reformed gas as a fuel, and since a flow rate setup performs so that the input of this fixed time-amount and reforming raw material may make increase from the time of the reforming raw material injection to a reforming machine, the ununiformity of a container and the reforming raw material by the volume in piping and the ununiformity of the cell fuel by the instability of a reforming reaction can prevent in early stages of a reforming raw material injection.

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**DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS**

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**[Brief Description of the Drawings]**

[Drawing 1] It is drawing showing the system outline of the fuel cell power plant by one example of this invention.

[Drawing 2] It is the timing diagram which shows the operation starting approach of one example this invention.

[Drawing 3] It is the timing diagram which shows the operation starting approach of other examples this invention.

[Drawing 4] It is the timing diagram which shows the operation starting approach of the example of further others of this invention.

[Drawing 5] It is drawing showing the system outline of the conventional fuel power plant.

[Drawing 6] It is the timing diagram which shows the operation starting approach of the conventional fuel power plant.

**[Description of Notations]**

1 Fuel Reforming Machine

2 Fuel Cell

3 DC to AC Converter

4 External Load

5 Switch

21 Resistor

22 23 Flow rate control unit

24 Controller

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**\* NOTICES \***

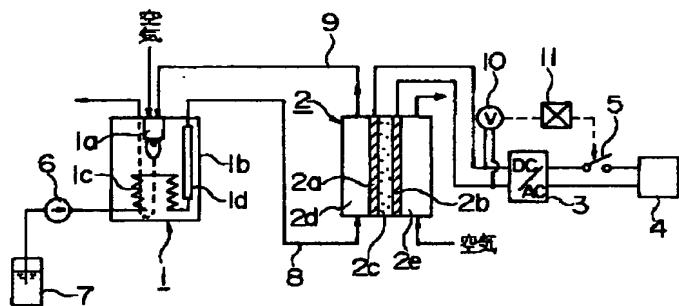
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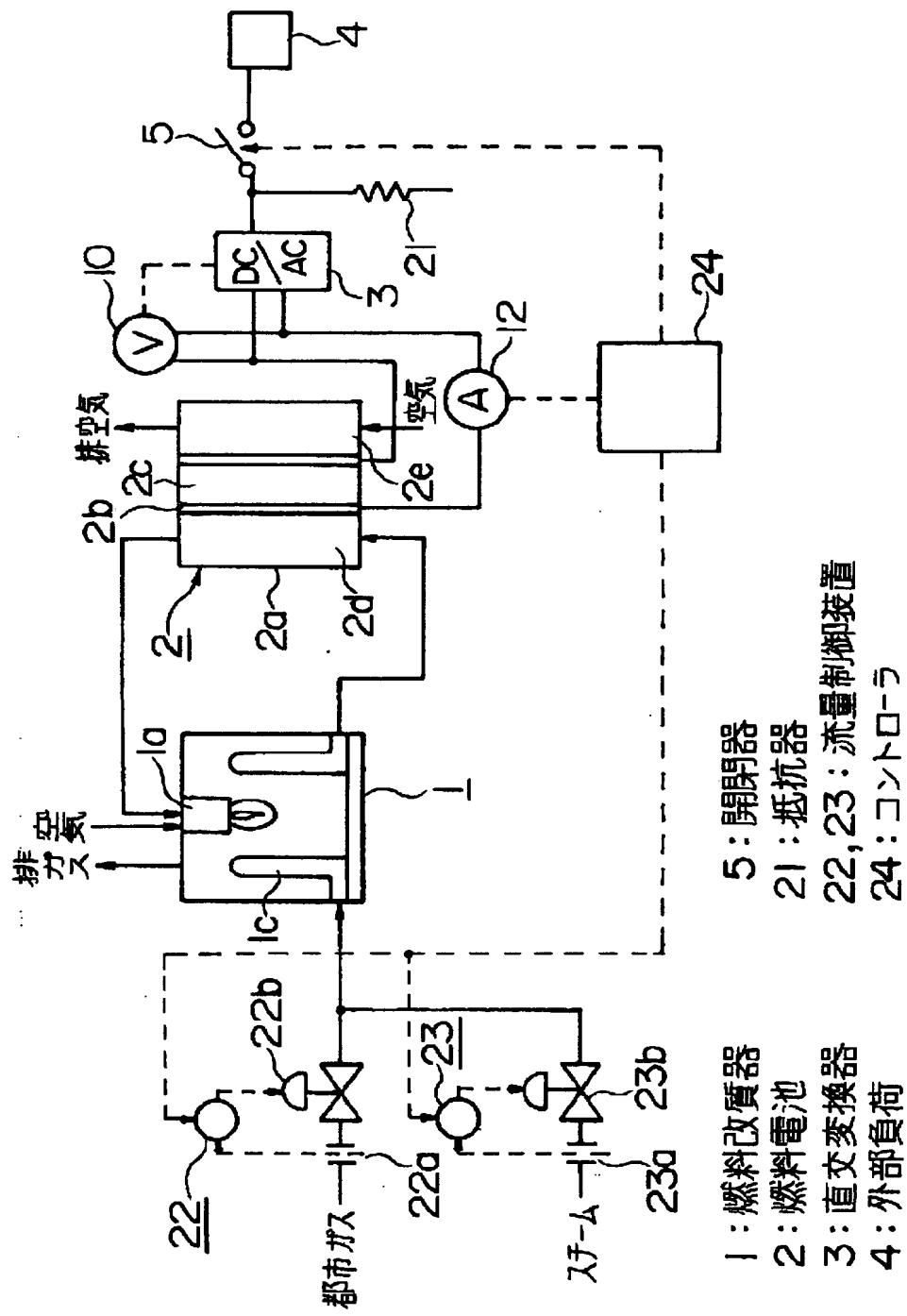
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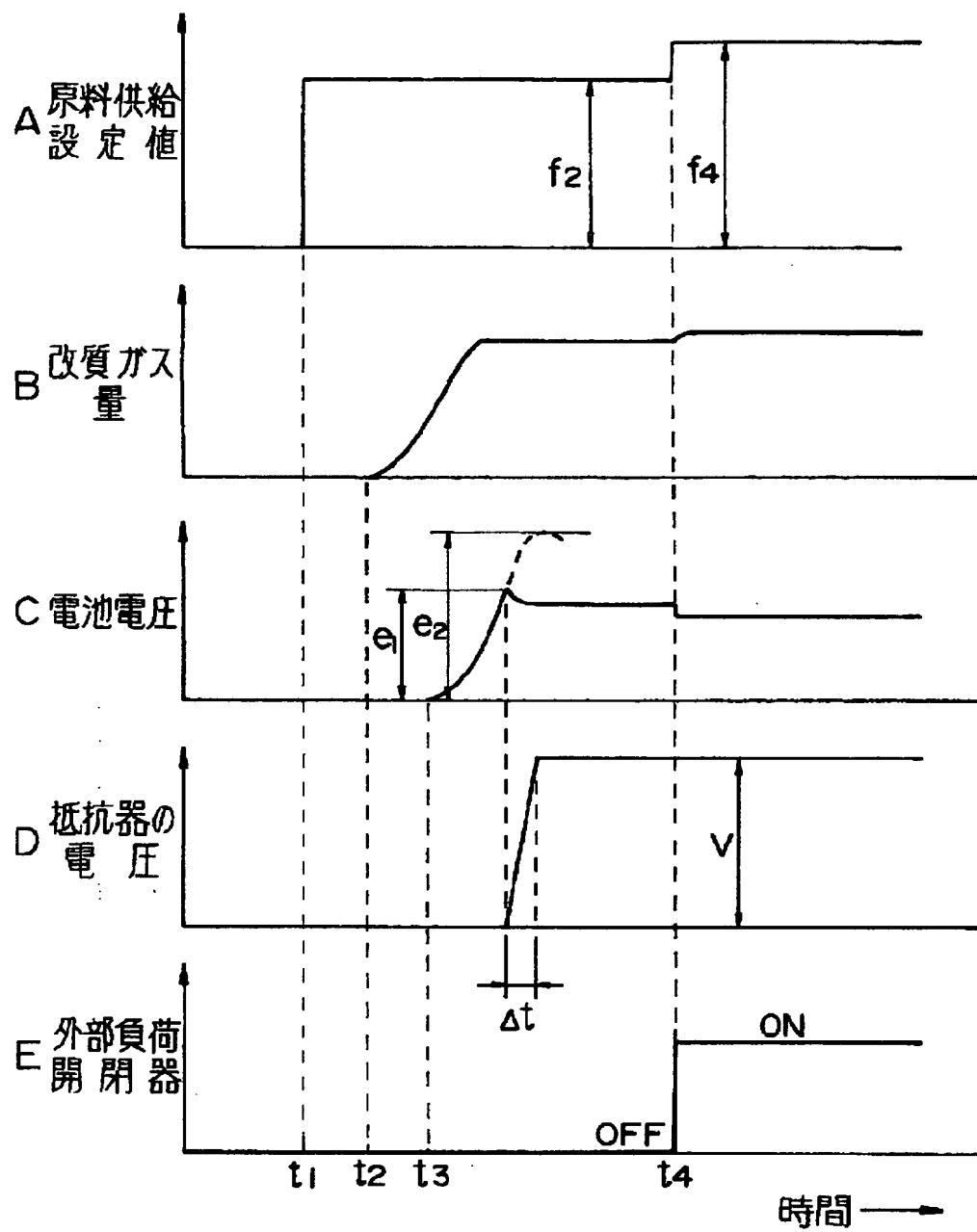
**DRAWINGS**

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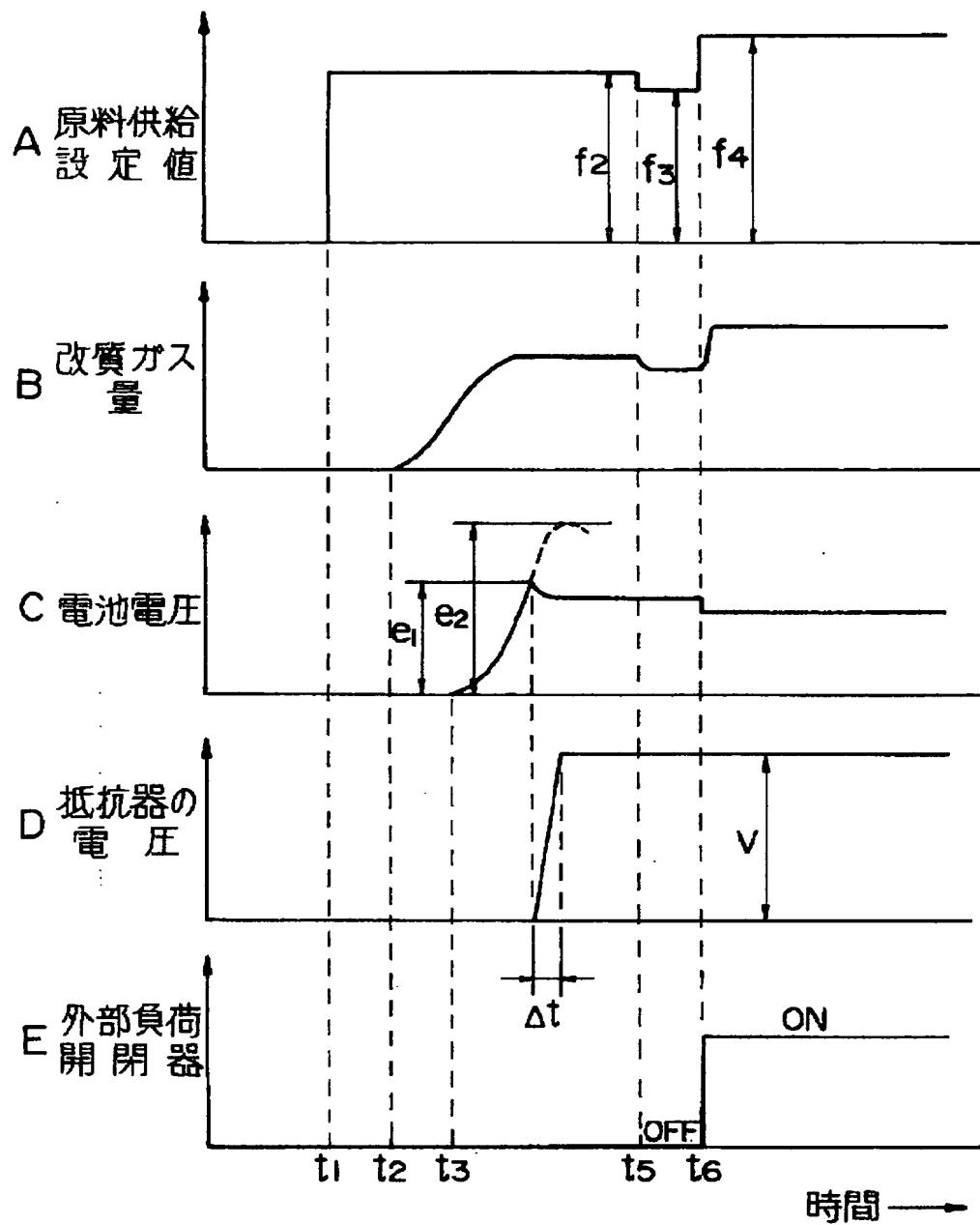
**[Drawing 5]****[Drawing 1]**



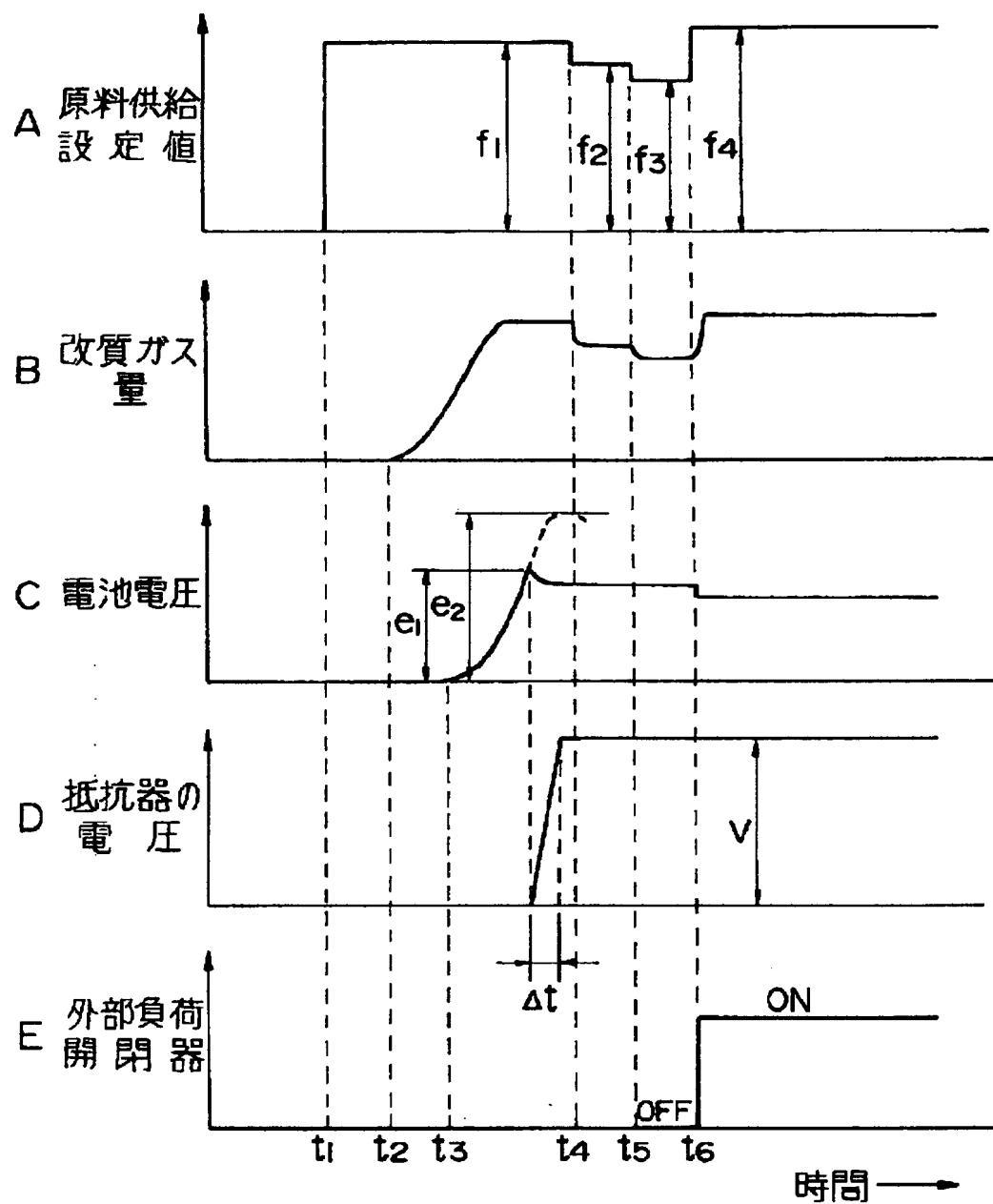
[Drawing 2]



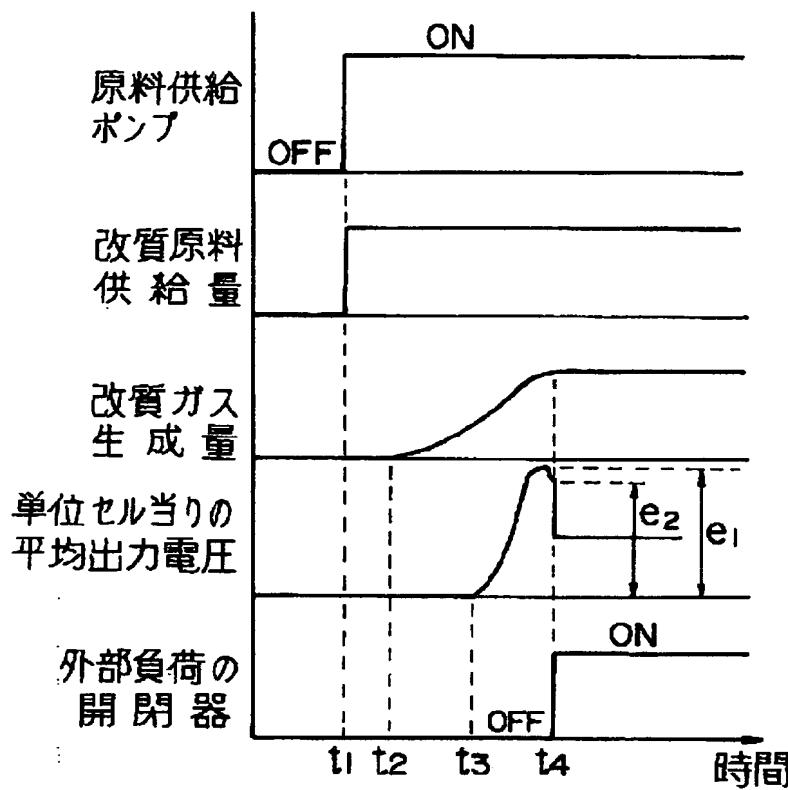
[Drawing 3]



[Drawing 4]



[Drawing 6]



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[Translation done.]

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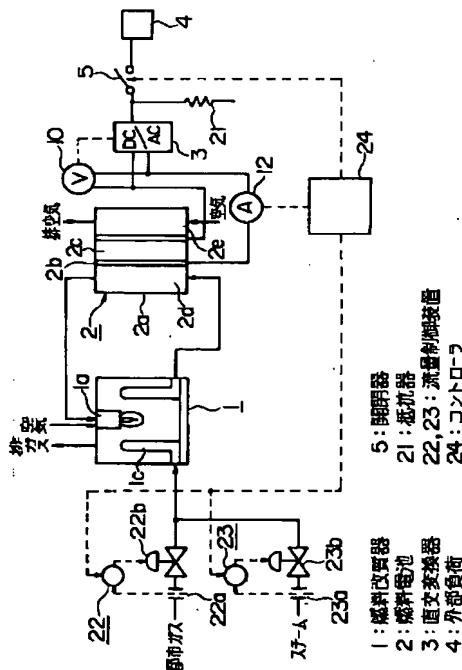
(54)【発明の名称】 燃料電池発電装置およびその運転起動方法

(57)【要約】

【目的】 燃料電池の劣化を抑制し、また燃料電池に接続される直交変換器等の耐圧を下げる。

【構成】 燃料改質器1で生成する水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料電池2に供給する。燃料電池2の直流出力を直交変換器3で交流に変換し、交流出力を開閉器5を介して外部負荷4に供給する。直交変換器3の出力側には電力消費手段としての抵抗器21を接続する。開閉器5の開閉動作をコントローラ24で制御する。運転起動時、電池2の電圧が所定電圧になるとき、電圧計10の計測値に基づいて直交変換器3より抵抗器21への給電を開始し、その給電電圧を0から定格電圧まで徐々に上昇させる。給電電圧が定格電圧Vとなった後に開閉器5を開じて外部負荷4を接続する。

【効果】 負荷投入が開放電圧となる前に行われるため、燃料電池の劣化を抑制でき、直交変換器の耐圧を下げることができる。また、高負荷が急に接続されることなく、燃料電池の燃料不足等を防止できる。



## 【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 燃料改質器と、この燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池と、この燃料電池に外部負荷を接続するまでの段階で上記燃料電池の電力を消費する電力消費手段とを備えることを特徴とする燃料電池発電装置。

【請求項2】 燃料改質器と、この燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池と、この燃料電池に外部負荷を接続するまでの段階で上記燃料電池の電力を消費する電力消費手段とを備え、上記電力消費手段に印加される電圧を上記改質ガスまたは空気の一方の流量増加に応じて徐々に増加することを特徴とする燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法。

【請求項3】 燃料改質器と、この燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池とを備え、上記燃料電池に外部負荷を接続する前に、上記改質器への改質原料の投入量を一定発電相当の流量設定から上記燃料電池電流より換算される流量設定によるフィードバック制御に切り換えることを特徴とする燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法。

【請求項4】 燃料改質器と、この燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池とを備え、

上記改質器への改質原料投入時より一定時間、この改質原料の投入量を増加させるように流量設定を行うことを特徴とする燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法。

## 【発明の詳細な説明】

## 【0001】

【産業上の利用分野】 この発明は、燃料電池発電装置およびこれを外部負荷に接続する前後の運転起動方法に関する。

## 【0002】

【従来の技術】 図5は、従来の燃料電池発電装置のシステム概要を示す図である。同図において、1は水素リッチな改質ガスを生成する燃料改質器、2は燃料改質器1で生成された改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池、3は燃料電池2の直流出力を交流に変換する直交変換器(DC/AC変換器)、4は外部負荷、5は負荷4への給電回路に挿入された開閉器である。

【0003】 ここで、改質器1は燃焼バーナ1aを装備の燃焼炉1b内に改質原料の気化器1cおよび改質触媒を充填した改質反応管1dを内蔵してなり、気化器1cに原料ポンプ6を介して改質原料タンク7が接続されている。また、燃料電池2は、周知のように単位セルを多数積層したセルスタックとして構成されたもので、図ではこの燃料電池を燃料電極2a、空気電極2b、電解質層2c、燃料ガス室2d、反応空気室2eで模式的に表わしている。上述した改質器1の改質反応管1dの出口

と燃料電池2の燃料ガス室2dの入口との間には、燃料ガス供給ライン8が、また燃料電池2の燃料ガス室2dの出口と改質器1の燃焼バーナ1aとの間にはオフガス供給ライン9が接続配管されている。

【0004】 次に動作について説明する。都市ガスやメタノール等の改質原料に水蒸気を混入して改質器1に供給すると、改質原料は改質触媒との触媒反応で水素リッチなガスに改質され、燃料ガス供給ライン8を通じて燃料電池2の燃料ガス室2dに供給される。一方、燃料電池2の反応空気室2eには反応空気が供給され、起電反応により燃料電池2が発電する。燃料電池2で起電反応に関与しなかった残余の燃料(オフガス)は改質器1の燃焼バーナ1aにオフガス供給ライン9を介して還流する。この燃焼バーナ1aで燃焼して得た熱で改質反応を継続させる。燃料電池2で起電反応によって出力される直流出力は直交変換器3で交流に変換され、開閉器5を介して外部負荷4に給電される。

【0005】 ところで、改質器1では改質原料の供給時点から多少遅れて改質ガス生成が開始し、徐々にその生成量が増すようになるが、改質ガス生成量が安定した量に達するまでにはある程度の時間を要する。また、燃料電池2への燃料供給開始直後は全体の燃料供給量が少なくてセルスタックの各単位セルに充分供給できないため、燃料電池2は燃料供給開始時点から多少遅れて起電反応により端子電圧が上昇するようになる。この場合に、外部負荷4を接続しない状態、つまり開回路の状態では燃料電池2の開回路電圧は燃料供給量の増加と共に上昇し、ピーク電圧まで一旦上昇した後に、電池内部でのガス分布の変化、電解質濃度の変化、漏洩電流等によりやや降下した電圧に平衡するような開回路電圧特性を示す。一方、燃料電池2は発電開始後に開回路のまま電圧の高い状態で長時間放置すると電極触媒としての白金触媒の溶出、シンタリングが進んで触媒性能が劣化することが知られている。

【0006】 そこで従来、燃料電池2の開回路電圧を検出し、この開回路電圧のピーク値到達を検出した後に外部負荷4を燃料電池2に接続して給電を行うことが提案されている(特開昭64-655号公報参照)。図6は、その運転起動方法を示すタイムチャートである。時点t1で改質原料を改質器1に供給開始すると、多少の遅れ時点t2より改質器1で改質ガスの生成が始まり、時間経過とともに生成量が増加し、時点t3にて燃料電池2で発電を開始する。電圧が上昇し、ピーク値e1に達した後、このピーク値よりも多少降下した電圧e2を検出した時点t4で外部負荷4への給電を行う。図5において、10は電圧計、11は制御器である。電圧計10で燃料電池2の開回路電圧を計測し、その計測値を制御器11に入力している。制御器11では開回路電圧の計測値の変化が監視され、上述したように電圧e2を検出した時点t4で開閉器5に投入指令が与えられる。

## 【0007】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】従来の燃料電池発電装置は以上のように構成されているので、次のような問題があった。即ち開放電圧まで外部負荷4を接続することができず、直交変換器3の耐電圧を高くとることが必要となり、直交変換器3の直流入力回路機器に必要以上の性能を要求する必要があった。また、燃料電池2についても、発電開始時に一度は開放電圧にさらさなければならず、劣化を早めることになる。

【0008】さらに、改質原料の投入量については考慮されていないが、実際に外部負荷4を接続させる場合には必要なガス流量を確保する必要がある。燃料電池2の開放電圧に対しては、ある一定量のガス量が電池内部に供給されれば、ガス流量に関係なく一定の開放電圧が生じる。そのため、外部負荷4に見合う量より少なく改質原料を投入する場合には、燃料電池2の燃料不足、改質器1の燃焼バーナ1aの失火を生じる。

【0009】この発明は上記のような問題点を解消するためになされたもので、燃料電池に接続される直交変換器等に必要以上の性能を要求する必要がなく、しかも燃料電池を開放電圧にさらすことがない燃料電池発電装置を提供することを目的とする。また、燃料電池の燃料不足や燃料改質器の燃焼バーナの失火等を生じることがない燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法を提供することを目的とする。さらに、燃料改質器に的確に改質原料を投入できる燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法を提供することを目的とする。

## 【0010】

【課題を解決するための手段】請求項第1項の発明に係る燃料電池発電装置は、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池に外部負荷を接続するまでの段階で燃料電池の電力を消費する電力消費手段を備えることを特徴とするものである。

【0011】請求項第2項の発明に係る燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法は、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池に外部負荷を接続するまでの段階で燃料電池の電力を消費する電力消費手段を備え、この電力消費手段に印加される電圧を改質ガスまたは空気の一方の流量増加に応じて徐々に増加することを特徴とするものである。

【0012】請求項第3項の発明に係る燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法は、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池を備え、この燃料電池に外部負荷を接続する前に、改質器への改質原料の投入量を一定発電相当の流量設定から燃料電池電流より換算される流量設定によるフィードバック制御に切り換えることを特徴とするものである。

【0013】請求項第4項の発明に係る燃料電池発電装置の運転起動方法は、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池を備え、改質器への改

質原料投入時より一定時間、この改質原料の投入量を増加させるように流量設定を行うことを特徴とするものである。

## 【0014】

【作用】請求項第1項の発明においては、燃料電池が外部負荷に接続される前に電力消費手段が燃料電池の負荷となり、負荷の投入が開放電圧前に行われる。そのため、燃料電池の劣化を抑制でき、また燃料電池に接続される直交変換器等の耐圧を下げることができる。

【0015】請求項第2項の発明においては、電力消費手段に印加される電圧が改質ガスまたは空気の一方の流量増加に応じて徐々に増加される。そのため、燃料電池に高負荷が急に接続されるものなく、燃料電池の燃料不足や改質器の燃焼バーナの失火を防止できる。

【0016】請求項第3項の発明においては、燃料電池に外部負荷を接続する前に改質原料の流量が一定発電相当の流量設定から燃料電池電流より換算される流量設定によるフィードバック制御に切り換えられる。そのため、燃料電池電圧の経時の低下に対して常に改質原料の流量が補正され、燃料電池の燃料不足、改質器の燃焼バーナの失火、燃焼バーナへの過大な燃料の供給を防止することができる。

【0017】請求項第4項の発明においては、改質原料投入初期に、その投入量が増加される。そのため、改質原料投入初期に容器、配管内の容積による改質原料の不均一や改質反応の不安定による電池燃料の不均一を防止することができる。

## 【0018】

## 【実施例】

実施例1. 図1はこの発明の一実施例による燃料電池発電装置のシステム概要を示す図である。図1において、図5と対応する部分には同一符号を付し、その詳細説明は省略する。同図において、直交変換器3の出力側には電力消費手段としての抵抗器21を接続する。また、直交変換器3には電圧計10の計測値を供給する。燃料電池2と直交変換器3の間に電流計12を接続し、燃料電池2の電池電流を計測する。そして、電流計12で計測される計測値をコントローラ24に供給する。

【0019】22は改質原料としての都市ガスの流量制御装置であり、22aおよび22bはそれぞれ都市ガスの供給経路に配した流量計および調節弁である。また、23は改質原料であるスチームの流量制御装置であり、23aおよび23bはスチームの供給経路に配した流量計および調節弁である。流量制御装置22、23の動作をコントローラ24によって制御する。また、開閉器5の開閉動作もコントローラ24によって制御する。本例は以上のように構成し、その他は図5の例と同様に構成する。

【0020】次に動作について説明する。燃料電池装置としての基本的動作は上述した図5の例と同様であるの

で省略する。以下、図2のタイムチャートを使用して運転起動方法について説明する。改質器1の昇温が完了し、改質反応が可能な温度（一般に700～800°C）になった時点 t1 で、流量制御装置22, 23によって改質原料である都市ガスおよびスチームが改質器1に導入される（図2A）。

【0021】改質器1の内部で改質原料は触媒反応により水素を多量に含む改質ガスに改質される。しかし、改質量は反応の安定および改質原料の導入前の不活性ガスの影響により、時点 t2 の時点より緩やかに増加する（同図B）。この改質ガスは、時間差をもって時点 t3 で燃料電池2に到達し、燃料電池2の電圧が起電反応により上昇を始める（同図C）。改質ガス量の増加とともに、燃料電池2の電圧が上昇し、負荷に接続されていない場合には開放電圧 e2 に到達してしまう（同図Cの破線）。

【0022】本例においては、燃料電池2の電圧上昇時に所定電圧 e1 (< e2) になるとき、電圧計10からの計測値に基づいて直交変換器3より抵抗器21への給電を開始する（同図D）。ここで、抵抗器21への給電電圧を0から時間 t をもって定格電圧Vまで上昇させる。抵抗器21への給電電圧が定格電圧Vとなった後、時点 t4 でコントローラ24より開閉器5に投入指令を与えて外部負荷4を燃料電池2に接続する（同図E）。なお、外部負荷4を燃料電池2に接続した後は、改質器1への改質原料の投入量 f4 をそれ以前の量 f2 より増加させる（同図A）。

【0023】図1の例によれば、直交変換器3の出力側に抵抗器21が接続され、燃料電池2の電圧が開放電圧となる前に直交変換器3より抵抗器21に給電される。これにより、負荷の投入が開放電圧となる前に行われるため、燃料電池2が開放電圧にさらされることなくその劣化を抑制でき、また燃料電池2に接続される直交変換器3の耐圧を下げることができる。また、抵抗器21への給電電圧を急激に上昇させずに徐々に上昇させているので、燃料電池2での水素の消費量は徐々に増加する。そのため、改質ガス中の水素や燃料電池2の内部でのガスの置換が改質原料の導入より短期間のために充分でなくとも、tの時間余裕があることから燃料電池2で燃料不足になることはない。また、燃料電池2で消費されないガスは改質器1の燃焼バーナ1aに戻されて改質熱源となるが、燃料電池2での水素消費量が改質ガスの生成速度に合わせて上昇することから、燃焼バーナ1aに燃料不足による失火が生じることはない。

【0024】実施例2. 次に、図3のタイムチャートを使用して、運転起動方法の他の例について説明する。改質原料の初期投入量は、一般には最低負荷運転に必要な出力に相当するガス量を想定して設定される。これは、改質原料導入時は燃料電池2が発電していないため基準値を設定できないからであり、燃料電池2が一定発電状

態になれば電池電流より必要水素量を決定でき、改質原料の必要投入量を算出できる。図3に示す例においては、改質原料の供給設定値を、燃料電池2が一定発電状態になった時点 t5 で、外部負荷4を燃料電池2に接続する前に、初期投入量 f2 から、電池電流フィードバックによる流量 f3 に切り換えるものである（図3A）。

【0025】この場合、コントローラ24により電流計12からの計測値に基づいて燃料電池2での水素消費量は一義的に決定される。また、燃料電池2での水素消費率は燃料電池2の特性により一般に75～80%であり、コントローラ24では、この比率で割り算して投入する改質原料の量を算出する。そして、コントローラ24は、この量を流量制御装置22, 23に指令して、フィードバック制御をする。

【0026】フィードバック制御により、燃料電池2に特性劣化（一般に経時の電圧が低下することが知られている）が生じても、過大な原料を投入することなく運転を行うことができる。また、フィードバック制御に移行した後の時点 t6 で開閉器5を閉じて燃料電池2に外部負荷4を接続することにより。外部負荷4の大小に関係なく安定した運転が可能となる。つまり、燃料電池2の燃料不足、改質器1の燃焼バーナ1aの失火、燃焼バーナ1aへの過大な燃料の供給を防止できる。なお、その他の運転起動動作は図2に示す例と同様であるため、説明は省略する。図3B～Eは、図2B～Eに対応している。

【0027】実施例3. 次に、図4のタイムチャートを使用して、運転起動方法のさらに他の例について説明する。改質原料の初期投入量において、流量制御装置22, 23から燃料電池2までの配管や容器の容積が大きい場合や、非常に容量の大きな容器がある場合の運転方法では、一般に改質原料を導入するラインは不活性ガスで置換されているため、原料を導入しても置換が充分に行えない。このため、初期の改質原料を導入する際に、必要な流量 f2 に対して置換の不充分さを考慮した流量 f1 を設定する。そして、改質器1より出力される改質ガスが充分となった後の時点 t4 で流量 f2 に設定する。

【0028】改質原料の初期投入量を f1 に設定することにより、改質原料の置換が早く行われると共に、改質ガスの量も増加するので、燃料電池2の燃料不足を引き起こすことなく発電できる。また、一般に改質開始時ににおいては、昇温用の燃焼バーナ1aを消火していることから、改質器1の温度は下がる傾向にあり、燃料電池2のオフガス量が増加しても改質器1が異常な高温になることはない。なお、他の運転起動動作は図3に示す例と同様であるため、説明は省略する。図4B～Eは、図3B～Eに対応している。

【0029】実施例4. 上述実施例においては、外部負荷4に給電するものに直交変換器3を用いたものを示したが、DC/DCコンバータを設けるものにも同様に適

用することができる。また、抵抗器21として交流ヒータの他に、直流抵抗を使用することもできる。また、改質原料として都市ガスを用いる例を示しているが、メタノール等の高分子炭化水素を用いてもよい。

#### 【0030】

【発明の効果】請求項第1項記載の発明によれば、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池に外部負荷を接続するまでの段階で、燃料電池の電力を消費する電力消費手段を備えるので、燃料電池が外部負荷に接続される前に電力消費手段が燃料電池の負荷となり、負荷の投入が開放電圧前に行われるため、燃料電池の劣化を抑制でき、また燃料電池に接続される直交変換器等の耐圧を下げることができる。

【0031】請求項第2項記載の発明によれば、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池に外部負荷を接続するまでの段階で燃料電池の電力を消費する電力消費手段を備え、この電力消費手段に印加される電圧を改質ガスまたは空気の一方の流量増加に応じて徐々に増加するので、燃料電池に高負荷が急に接続されることなく、燃料電池の燃料不足や改質器の燃焼バーナの失火を防止できる。

【0032】請求項第3項記載の発明によれば、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池を備え、この燃料電池に外部負荷を接続する前に、改質器への改質原料の投入量を一定発電相当の流量設定から燃料電池電流より換算される流量設定によるフィードバック制御に切り換えるので、燃料電池電圧の経時的低下に対して常に改質原料の流量が補正され、燃料電池の燃料不足、改質器の燃焼バーナの失火、燃焼バーナへの過大な燃料の供給を防止できる。

【0033】請求項第4項記載の発明によれば、燃料改質器で生成した水素リッチな改質ガスを燃料とする燃料電池を備え、改質器への改質原料投入時より一定時間、この改質原料の投入量を増加させるように流量設定を行うので、改質原料投入初期に容器、配管内の容積による改質原料の不均一や改質反応の不安定による電池燃料の不均一を防止することができる。

#### 【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】この発明の一実施例による燃料電池発電装置のシステム概要を示す図である。

【図2】この発明の一実施例の運転起動方法を示すタイムチャートである。

【図3】この発明の他の実施例の運転起動方法を示すタイムチャートである。

【図4】この発明のさらに他の実施例の運転起動方法を示すタイムチャートである。

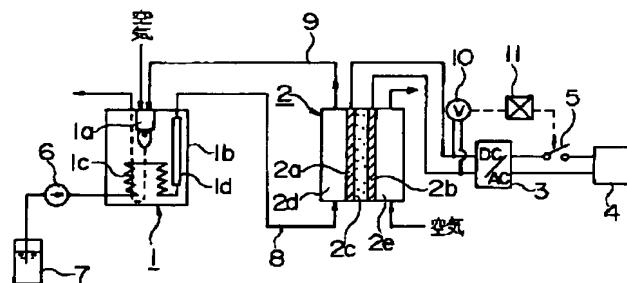
【図5】従来の燃料発電装置のシステム概要を示す図である。

【図6】従来の燃料発電装置の運転起動方法を示すタイムチャートである。

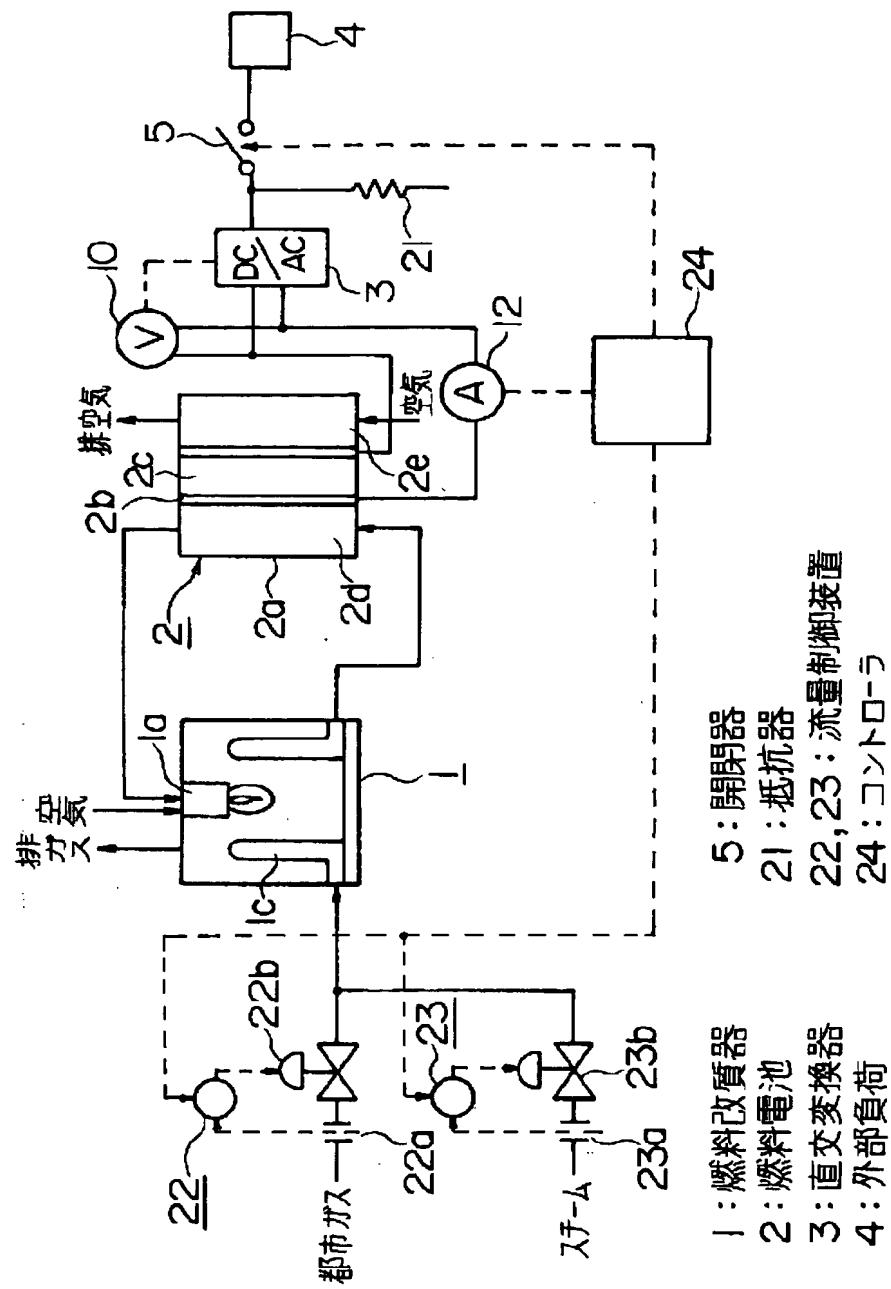
#### 【符号の説明】

- 1 燃料改質器
- 2 燃料電池
- 3 直交変換器
- 4 外部負荷
- 5 開閉器
- 21 抵抗器
- 22, 23 流量制御装置
- 24 コントローラ

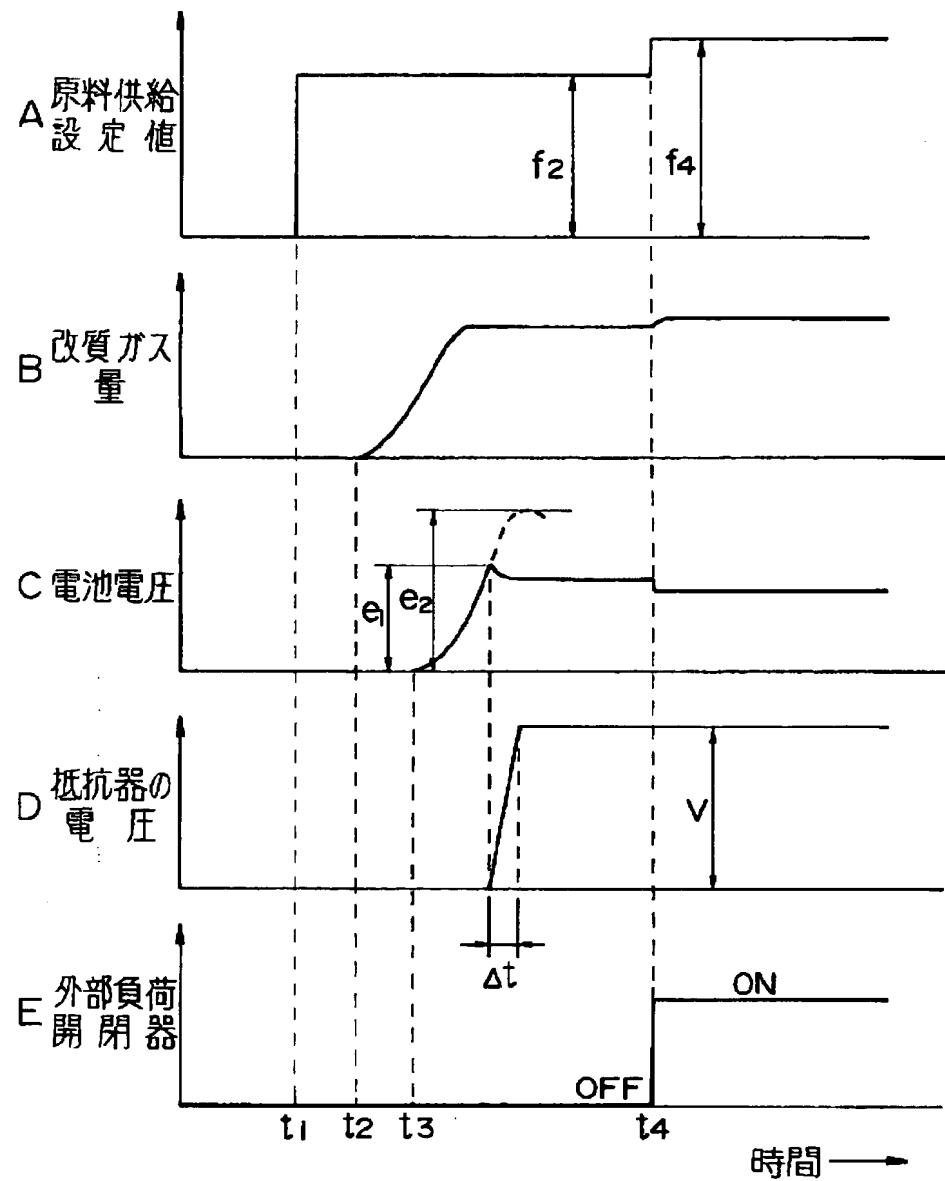
【図5】



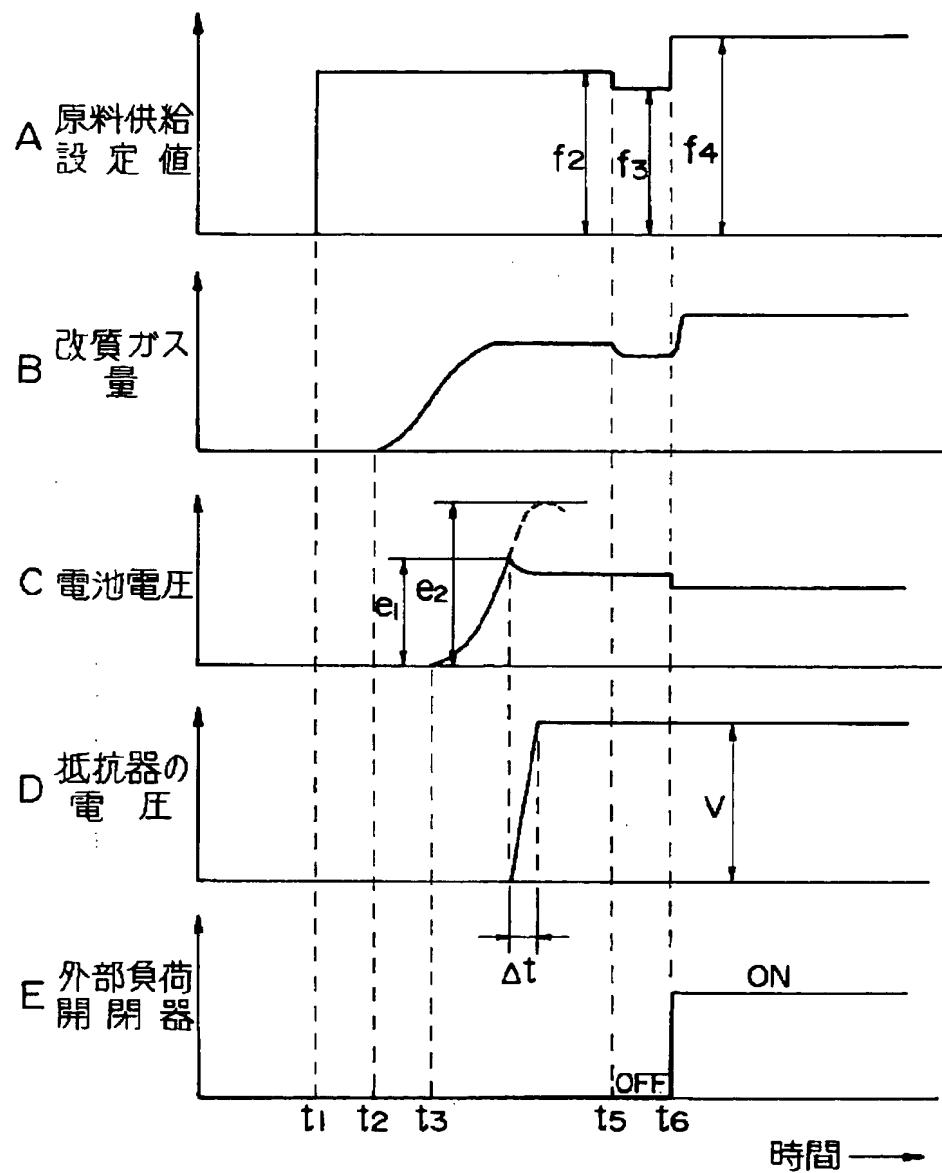
【図1】



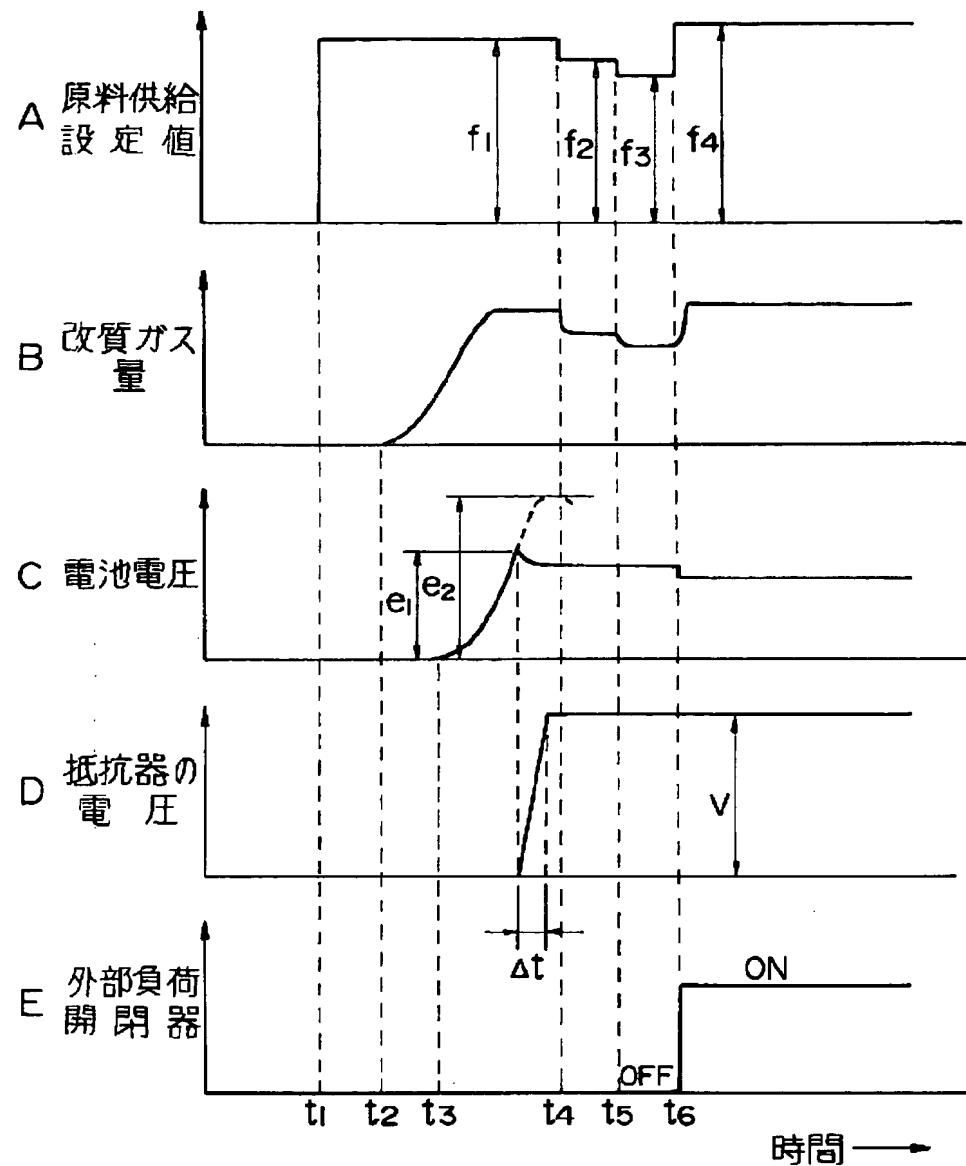
【図2】



【図3】



【図4】



【図6】

